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SUBJECT: TURKEY: AMBASSADOR'S MEETING WITH OPPOSITION CHP
LEADER BAYKAL

(U) Classified by Ambassador Eric Edelman. Reason: 1.5 (b,d).

11. (C) Summary: In a Sept. 17 meeting with the Ambassador, opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) chairman Deniz Baykal said it will be difficult to support USG policy in Iraq given the current ambiguous attitude of some Iraqis toward Turkey. He also asserted that any new UNSC resolution will have to explain how power will be handed over to Iraqi civilians and provide guarantees of Iraqi territorial integrity. Baykal denied his party is anti-American and insisted CHP believes in strong U.S.-Turkey ties. End summary.

"Uninviting Atmosphere" in Iraq

12. (C) In a lengthy discussion that centered almost entirely on Iraq, CHP leader Baykal claimed that the current environment in Iraq makes it hard for Turkey to contribute troops to a stabilization force. A subdued Baykal said that public statements by some Kurds in N. Iraq and by the IGC have created a "serious ambiguity" with regard to whether Turkish support is wanted or not. Unspecified controversial statements made by Barzani and Talabani are negatively impacting Turkish public opinion, creating an "uninviting atmosphere." Baykal also raised the presence of PKK/KADEK militants, which he said limits Turkey's room for maneuver. He said the great danger is that instability in Iraq will grow and could spill over into other countries in the region.

13. (C) The Ambassador urged Baykal to look at the big picture. Turkey should decide whether and how it can contribute to the democratic process already underway. The Ambassador explained the USG's commitment to fighting terrorism, including the threat from PKK/KADEK.

UNSC Resolution Might Help, or Not

14. (C) Baykal -- who openly opposes USG Iraq policy primarily, he said, because it lacks international legitimacy -- did not say whether a new UNSC resolution would alter his party's stance. He said that any UNSC resolution would have to do two things: 1) provide a clear timetable for the transfer of authority to Iraqi civilians; and 2) provide clear guarantees of Iraqi territorial integrity. Baykal underscored that the clarity of the timetable would be the most important thing.

CHP Shenanigans

15. (C) The Ambassador noted USG's great disappointment with CHP's inflammatory rhetoric. Baykal claimed CHP has been very measured (sic) in its opposition to USG Iraq policy. He said he personally made sure no CHP local or national organization demonstrated against the U.S., despite pressure from the grassroots. Baykal defended statements made by former senior diplomats and current CHP M.P.s Onur Oymen and Sukru Elekdag, saying "they are still friends of the U.S." He suggested that the U.S. look at their statements from a different -- though unspecified -- perspective. Baykal stressed that CHP supports strong U.S.-Turkey ties but hopes the U.S. will be sensitive to the party's concerns.

Comment

17. (C) Baykal received the Ambassador without any other CHP officials present. This probably reflects Baykal's desire to control the flow of information to the press and within his party. Moreover, with his party lagging in the polls and rumblings of discontent in the ranks, Baykal probably did not want anyone to see him 'soft' on the U.S. privately, while forcefully criticizing the U.S. publicly. Baykal's attempt to portray the CHP's public stance on Iraq as something other than anti-American demagoguery is pure fiction.

EDELMAN